

Activity Report: Chas Meeker

This activity report covers January through April, 1987, during which period my personal time was allocated as follows:

Fieldwork out of town (Batera, Duber, Hindko projects)	50 weeks
Fieldwork in Peshawar (Rework, calibrate Pashtu SRT)	2
Computer conference	2
Misc (Cal's visit, payroll and other admin. tasks)	2
Devotional conference	1
Personal time (Mom & Kara in Jan., Lahore in Apr.)	20
Total (January through April, 1987)	17 weeks

Other project researchers -- Pakistani and expatriate -- have also contributed to these projects. The project summaries below include activities by all of us, except the Hindko summary only includes my limited involvement. Along with these summaries, I have included a number of anecdotes which illustrate how our Pakistani co-researchers have been involved in the project.

Survey Projects

Batera Kohistani Project. Extensive bilingualism testing completed with 31 subjects during January and February. The test battery included a hometown recorded text test (RTT), Pashtu RTT, Urdu RTT, hometown sentence repetition test (SRT), Pashtu SRT and Urdu SRT. In addition, a each subject was given a Language Attitude - Language Use (LALU) questionnaire and a preliminary questionnaire (PQ) which included basic demographic information about each member of his household.

Most of the field work was conducted during day trips from Besham, the local market town just downstream which is populated predominantly by Pashtu speakers. Jim, Amjed and I worked together in developing the tests I administered about one third of the tests independently while Jim and

a complete stratified sample. (Duber is expected to be just one dialect in the west bank Kohistani dialect network; Batera, on the other hand, is expected to be independent of other languages.) Data has been processed to the same limited extent as the Batera project.

Hindko Project. This project is primarily David's responsibility, but I was available to help him for about one week in March. Illyas and I made a trip to Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir. We collected and checked a Hindko word list; recorded, transcribed and translated a hometown RTT with question prompts and translated and recorded Urdu RTT questions, a hometown SRT, and RTT and SRT explanations.

We stayed in Muzaffarabad itself. Illyas' assistance proved invaluable, both in providing contacts and in collecting data. Without him, I could have never entered Kashmir. The police at the border checkpost told me that foreigners were not allowed to visit Kashmir. Illyas assured them we were scholars who only wished a brief visit as part of a Quaid-i-Azam University research project. Their suspicions allayed, we were allowed to pass. None of the tourist information I have read before or since mentions this restriction; it may have imposed recently or just temporarily or it could be because we came from Balakot side (rather than Murree). In Muzaffarabad, we found a lady professor Illyas knew from university who is now a research fellow at the Institute of Kashmir Studies. She and her brother helped us locate Hindko speakers to assist us. Illyas' knowledge of Panjabi and Urdu helped us avoid mixture in the word list, and he was able to make sure we avoided the wooden, unnatural translations which tended to be the first response to our elicitation.

The data collected is still in rough form; David and I have yet to discuss it. He decided to exclude Muzaffarabad from his current project test. He

not complete the work in other areas. The text will need additional work to get a word for word translation in addition to the phrase by phrase one I now have. A test tape with the hometown RTT/SRT and Urdu RTT/SRT could be prepared from the tapes we now have, and one of our Pakistani co-researchers return to Muzaffarabad conduct the test. However, additional questions will have to be translated and recorded before dialect intelligibility tests could be dubbed. Before any of our expatriots researchers return to Azad Kashmir, we should clarify the restriction on our entry. Perhaps Adam Nayyar could help; in addition, I think we may be able to get an invitation from the Institute of Kashmir Studies.

Sentence Repetition

In our continuing efforts to develop the SRT, I have written three short papers, initiated several experiments[?], and worked on improving and calibrating the Pashtu SRT test.

Changes in SRT procedure. In using the SRT in Batera and Duber, we tried several new procedures, many in response to the SRT subcommittee report at our December meetings. My paper «Sentence Repetition in Indus Kohistan» describes four major changes and their rationale. ① Recording each sentence only once, ② using a hometown screening test, and ③ carefully looking for dialect differences and for synonym substitutions. Followup papers are needed to highlight what has been learned. The paper also touched on several minor changes: including a recorded explanation for the SRT, including practice sentences in both Pashtu and Urdu, including the Urdu test before the Pashtu one, including 8 longer Pashtu sentences and recording the responses of the first several subjects in each area. This latter allowed us to make a careful search for dialect differences and synonym substitution, and also to check for inter-scorer reliability (see ACTIVITY.TXT Chas Meeker

below). The longer (previously eliminated) Pashtu sentences were included in hopes of developing a new Pashtu SRT, more discriminatory at the higher levels of bilingual ability.

During this work our Pakistani co-researchers helped us overcome several obstacles. Scoring a hometown SRT in an unknown language is not simple, especially for someone without linguistic training. Nooran overcame this by designing his own training program that involved repeated listening to the sentences and discussing them with native speakers. He also helped us decide to translate a standard set of sentences for the hometown SRT. He pointed out that this would make it easier for the scorer, since he would already know the meaning, and could concentrate on the sounds in the new language. This consideration had not occurred to us. Nooran and Amjad also helped clarify the significance of potential dialect differences and synonym substitutions I heard on our recorded SRT tapes.

Expanding and recalibrating Pashtu SRT. The additional subjects tested in Batera and Duber allowed me to develop a new Pashtu SRT, which being based on subjects with a broader range of bilingual abilities, should prove to be more discriminatory, especially at the higher levels. I used a new discrimination index to select these sentences, one which should theoretically select sentences discriminatory at a variety of levels. I need to write a paper describing this new index, how to use it and why it should prove to be a better discriminator.

We also worked to calibrate the SRT tests against the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) scale of bilingual ability, measured using the <<other evaluation>> technique. We have now used this method in Nepal and Pakistan to evaluate the ability of over 200 individuals. I summarized our experiences the paper, <<Bilingual Evaluation by Third Parties>>, which

includes suggestions for training administrators, selecting raters and the use of different criteria for evaluation.

Our Pakistani co-researchers had worked on calibrating the Pashtu and Urdu SRT's last December. But because of a change in the Urdu test (to eliminate its unnatural. <dictation> style), and the desire to have a larger calibration sample, we decided to recalibrate the tests. Compared to December, our coressearchers were much more confident in their ability to administer the <<other evaluation rating>>, partly because we gave them better training.

This training began in March with retranslating the proficiency descriptions into Urdu. Nooran had indicated that he would prefer to use an Urdu translation rather than a Pashtu one. Pakistani Pathans usually have much more experience reading Urdu than Pashtu. Our team of two expatriates (Dave and Chas), two Pathans (Nooran and Amjed) and one Panjabhi (Illyas) spent two grueling days translating the criteria into Urdu. That time proved to be an intensive course in sociolinguistics and translation principles as we together struggled to express the proficiency descriptions in Urdu. It was also the best training possible for administrating the <<other evaluation>>. Nooran later reported that whenever raters had questions, he remembered the explanations and examples we had discussed during translation.

Finding ratees who had contact with non-mother-tongue speakers of a wide variety of abilities also proved a bit tricky. Nooran and I both came away from our discussions of potential raters and ratees with a much better appreciation of the sociolinguistic complexity that is Peshawar. Nooran, Amjed and Illyas did the actual interviewing of raters and testing of the

ratees during March and April. This freed us from the need to depend on raters who know English, and also freed us up to do other work.

An example of this <<increased sociolinguistic awareness>> is perhaps in order. Nooran had taken leave for a few days due to a land dispute between his father and the father of a former classmate of Nooran. These people are Hindko speaking folks, though Nooran had not been aware of any trace of accent in his class fellow's Pashtu. But as soon as the father spoke, he immediately knew, and he began to think of our proficiency descriptions mentally trying to evaluate the father's Pashtu. Later, he met one of his classmate's uncles, whose Pashtu accent was a puzzling combination of two geographically separate Pashtu accents. Sure enough, the uncle had spent number of years in each of the two places!

Additional SR related research. Nooran's increasing sociolinguistic awareness caused me to consider the possibility of having Nooran himself evaluate people. I asked him if he thought he could talk to a fellow for 30 minutes of chit-chat and then evaluate his Pashtu. <<Why not!>> he replied, all that would be needed would be to memorize the proficiency descriptions. As a result of this discussion, I have begun to consider evaluating bilingualism using a modified FSI interview technique. My thoughts on this possibility are included in a paper entitled <<Proposed FSI-type interview to evaluate bilingualism>>

Several additional mini research projects have been initiated in conjunction with the Sentence Repetition. The SRT tests which were recorded in Duber and Batera have been scored by all of the people who have done SRT scoring in the project. When this data has been analyzed, it will be possible to draw some conclusions about the consistency between SRT scorer. Another mini research projects seeks to test whether the order of

sentences are presented in the SRT makes a significant difference in the score. The Pashtu SRT used for calibration had several "experimental" sentences dubbed onto the end. Some of these are repeated from earlier in the test, but they follow an easier or a harder sentence. I hope to analyze the data from these two mini projects and write two papers, <<Scoring Consistency in Sentence Repetition Tests>> and <<Does the order of the sentences effect Sentence Repetition scores?>>

Involvement of Pakistani co-researchers.

Our Pakistani co-researchers have made a valuable asset to the project. They have received some training in formal <<classroom>> type sessions. Informal discussions over meals or in our hotel rooms have covered a wide range of sociolinguistic topics, as well as comparing cultures, languages, phonetics and grammar. But by far the bulk of their training has been the daily on-the-job work of the sociolinguistic survey. I have been pleased to our co-researchers develop to the point where they can do a great deal of work independently. As they have been trained in research methods, they have been able to make specific suggestions which have assisted the project. Some have been simple procedural ideas, such as recording questionnaire responses on pre-printed forms rather than in blank copy books. They have made substantial suggestions, helping in day-to-day and longer term planning, even to the point of outlining their ideas for how to organize field work projects yet on the horizon. Our research has become more and more a cooperative arrangement where expatriate and Pakistani each have valuable contributions to make.

The most telling example of this symbiosis is in our relationships with the local people among whom we work. The local cultures within which we work are different in many ways from the home culture of both the Pakistani and

the expatriate researchers. The Pakistani sometimes has more insight since his home culture is more similar of the local culture; the expatriate similarly sometimes has a better perspective since his home culture is more distant. Sometimes the local people are more inclined to trust their fellow Pakistani; other times they are more inclined to respect the expatriate. There are great advantages to collaborating together.